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Contact: Greg Wilkinson, (907) 269-7285, Cell (907) 382-7032  
[gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov](mailto:gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov)  
Ann Potempa, (907) 269-7957, Cell (907) 230-4001  
[ann.potempa@alaska.gov](mailto:ann.potempa@alaska.gov)

## **State to recognize National Public Health Week with a series of stories**

*Day 1: April 2 — Obesity prevention*

ANCHORAGE — The Alaska Division of Public Health is recognizing National Public Health Week with a series of stories centered on the week's theme: A Healthier America Begins Today.

Each day, Monday through Friday, we will focus on a different aspect of health:

- Monday, April 2 — Obesity prevention through active living and healthy eating
- Tuesday, April 3 — Reducing the impact of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- Wednesday, April 4 — Preventing communicable diseases through immunization
- Thursday, April 5 — Preventing sexually transmitted diseases
- Friday, April 6 — Mental and emotional well-being

Sometimes the smallest change can make the biggest difference. Small changes in diet and exercise, tobacco use, immunization practices and sexual conduct can help people stay healthy. Yet each year, nearly 1 million Americans die from diseases that could have been prevented.

Obesity continues to be a serious health concern in Alaska. In 2010, 67 percent of adults (up from 49 percent in 1991) were overweight or obese, and the state has high rates of childhood and youth obesity as well. Overweight and obesity are alarming because both conditions increase the risk for a number of health problems, including chronic diseases that can lead to reduced quality of life, premature death, and substantial healthcare — and productivity-related costs.

According to the 2010 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS):

- 26% of Alaska high school students are overweight or obese; 12% are classified as obese
- 26% of Alaska adults do NOT meet the minimum physical activity recommendation
- 45% of Alaska adults and 24% of Alaska students watch more than three hours of TV a day
- 77% of Alaska adults and 79% of Alaska students do not consume the recommend five servings of fruits and vegetables each day

- 46% of Alaska adults and 18% of students drink at least one sugar-sweetened beverage or soda a day

“Big changes can be daunting, so we suggest starting small and building on each success,” said Karol Fink with the state’s Obesity Prevention Program. “Learn ways to incorporate more fruits and vegetables in your diet, eat healthier snacks, reduce your portion size and engage in some form of physical activity every day.”

Fink also recommends making changes as a family, or finding a friend or someone at work to team up with.

For more tips on small changes you can incorporate into your daily routine go to:

Diet: <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/>

Physical activity: <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/index.html>

April 3 — Reducing the impact of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

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